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Registered to AS9100

2/4/14

Ron Wild
Committee Assistant
House Comitee on general, Housing and Military Affairs
Room 41
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Ron,

Here is the testimony I gave today over Skype at the Committee hearing. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Best

Julian Stephens
General Manager
Stephens Precision

I would like to thank the Committee for hearing my testimony on H.208. As a small business owner in the state of Vermont. I employ 15 highly skilled employees and every one of them is valuable to me. However valued they are, in order for my business to function every one of them has to produce something, be it a product or transaction the like. Without Employees coming to work and doing these essential functions I cannot pay them.

During a time when good jobs are few and far between and companies are lean it would seem to be a good idea to mandate a benefits package to improve workers livelihoods however the reality is quite different. My company is lean because we have to be to survive. If I could afford to pay more people to decrease the workload of my employees I gladly would. If I could afford to give my employees a better benefits package I would gladly do that too. I agree that sick leave is important when an employee is going through a rough spell. When there is some discretion and the employer is not obligated to pay sick leave they employees do not abuse the privilege. They also feel some obligation to make sure their tasks are covered or make up time when they can.

As an employer seeking a talented work force I know that potential employees judge me not just by the salary I offer, but also vacation, sick leave and other benefits. It is



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part of what makes a challenging job worthwhile. Mandating a benefits package takes the decision away from the people best suited to determine what employees want and need, the employee. It is the persons choice if they want the job, it is also the persons choice to work hard and excel at that job. As an employer it is my duty to appreciate and reward hard work and excellence. That reward is what gives my employees loyalty and dedication and drives productivity.

I fear this bill is another governmental mandate requiring small businesses to conform to new and costly regulations. This is an unfair burden for those small businesses who have survived the recession. This bill spreads its unfairness to all Vermonters who will be stuck in a shrinking local economy while big businesses take their dollars to more competitive states. All Vermonters will also be forced to pay higher prices for products and fuel as companies are forced to compensate for mandatory benefits by raising prices. Companies like mine that sell products to other areas of the country will be severely impacted as they will still have to compete on the same global economy with higher operating costs.

If this bill passes it is going to drive me out of business as it will my neighbors too. Maybe not today, maybe not next week but to compensate for these requirements I will be forced to make a decision, either decrease my payroll by eliminating one position and spreading the work to my already overburdened employees or cut their hours. Either of these choices is damaging to the workers who are in fact the people you are trying to help.

Before your vote I want you to put yourselves in my shoes to see a different side of government mandated employee benefits. We have just had a rough transition with the new health care changes this year, piling on another mandate that increases my budget and takes management time to comply with is taking time better spent trying to expand and get new business to so that I may expand.

This is Vermont and like many Vermonters I run a small business in a small town, these employees are not faceless people I am trying to take advantage of and make a quick buck, these are family members, high school classmates and friends. I am here because I am trying to do something good for them by providing them with a good stable career, decent benefits and health care.

Walk a mile in my shoes and please evaluate the decision you are making carefully. Make absolutely sure that in your efforts to improve society you aren't hurting the



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people you are intending to help. I invite you to come, visit and meet my team of talented employees and talk to them about how they feel about this bill.

Thank you very much.